

Message Text

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PAGE 01 STATE 102444

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ORIGIN EUR-12

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 /013 R

DRAFTED BY EUR/IB:AWLUKENS:MJK

APPROVED BY EUR/IB MR. LUEKSN

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TO AMEMBASSY LISBON

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TAGS: PFOR, PGOV, PO

SUBJECT: MR. LAINGEN TESTIMONY

FOLLOWING IS STATEMENT BY MR. LAINGEN, DEPUTY ASSISTANT SECRETARY EUROPEAN AFFAIRS BEFORE THE HOUSE INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS COMMITTEE SUBCOMMITTEE ON INTERNATIONAL POLITICAL AND MILITARY AFFAIRS, GIVEN ON MAY 1, 1975:

MR. CHAIRMAN, MEMBERS OF THE SUBCOMMITTEE:

TWO MONTHS AGO, I HAD THE PLEASURE OF APPEARING BEFORE YOU FOR A DETAILED DISCUSSION OF THE POLITICAL AND ECONOMIC SITUATION IN PORTUGAL. MUCH HAS HAPPENED THERE SINCE THAT TIME, AND MY COLLEAGUES AND I ARE GLAD TO HAVE THIS FURTHER OPPORTUNITY TO EXCHANGE VIEWS WITH THE COMMITTEE.

THE CULMINATION OF MANY OF THESE EVENTS, OF COURSE, WAS IN THE CONSTITUENT ASSEMBLY ELECTIONS HELD ON APRIL 25, THE FIRST ANNIVERSARY OF THE REVOLUTION IN PORTUGAL. AN IMPRESSIVE 92 OF PORTUGAL'S REGISTERED VOTERS CAST THEIR BALLOTS IN WHAT APPEARS TO HAVE BEEN AN ORDERLY AND GENUINELY FREE BALLOTING PROCESS.

THE NEWLY ELECTED ASSEMBLY, WHICH CONSISTS OF 247 DELEGATES, IS CHARGED WITH THE RESPONSIBILITY OF DRAFTING A NEW CONSTITUTION BUT WITHIN THE STRICT GUIDELINES SET

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PAGE 02 STATE 102444

DOWN BY THE ARMED FORCES MOVEMENT AND RECENTLY AGREED

TO BY THE PRINCIPAL POLITICAL PARTIES. THE ASSEMBLY WILL HAVE 90 DAYS TO COMPLETE ITS WORK, WITH PROVISION FOR AN EXTENSION OF ANOTHER 90 DAYS SHOULD THAT BE NECESSARY.

OF THE 12 POLITICAL PARTIES PARTICIPATING IN THE ELECTIONS, THE SOCIALISTS RECORDED THE GREATEST DEGREE OF POPULAR SUPPORT, WITH 38 OF THE BALLOT. THE CENTER LEFT POPULAR DEMOCRATIC PARTY RECEIVED 26.4, THE COMMUNISTS 12.5, AND THE SOCIAL DEMOCRATIC CENTER 7.6 THE COMMUNIST FRONT PORTUGUESE DEMOCRATIC MOVEMENT RECORDED 4, AND 4 WAS DIVIDED AMONG A RANGE OF SMALLER PARTIES. ONLY 7 CAST BLANK BALLOTS.

WHILE IT WOULD BE INAPPROPRIATE FOR ME TO COMMENT IN ANY DETAIL ON THE OUTCOME OF THE ELECTIONS, I HAVE NO DOUBT THAT ALL AMERICANS WELCOME THEM AS DEMONSTRATING THE DEMOCRATIC SENTIMENTS OF THE OVERWHELMING MAJORITY OF THE PORTUGUESE PEOPLE. THE ELECTORAL RESULTS ARE OF SPECIAL IMPORTANCE IN RECORDING, FOR THE FIRST TIME, THE RANGE AND STRENGTH OF POLITICAL OPINION AMONG THE PEOPLE OF PORTUGAL. HOWEVER THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN THE EXPRESSION OF DEMOCRATIC VIEWS AND GOVERNMENTAL ACTION REMAINS TO BE ESTABLISHED. THEIR PRACTICAL IMPACT IN THE SHORT TERM HAS BEEN LIMITED BY THE PRIOR ACTION OF THE ARMED FORCES MOVEMENT IN LAYING DOWN THE ESSENTIAL OUTLINES OF THE CONSTITUTION WHICH THE ELECTED MEMBERS OF THE CONSTITUENT ASSEMBLY ARE NOW TO DEVELOP IN DETAIL.

THE ELECTIONS ARE THUS ONE FURTHER STAGE IN A CONTINUING PROCESS OF CHANGE IN PORTUGAL, A PROCESS THAT IS OBVIOUSLY NOT YET COMPLETE. AS A FRIEND AND ALLY OF LONG STANDING WITH PORTUGAL, THE UNITED STATES WILL REMAIN AN INTERESTED AND SYMPATHETIC OBSERVER. IT IS IN THAT SENSE IN PARTICULAR THAT WE WELCOME THIS RENEWED OPPORTUNITY TO SHARE IMPRESSIONS WITH YOU AND YOUR COMMITTEE.

MR. CHAIRMAN, THIS CONCLUDES MY OPENING STATEMENT. MY COLLEAGUES AND I BELIEVE WE COULD MOST EFFECTIVELY RESPOND IN EXECUTIVE SESSION TO ANY QUESTIONS YOU OR

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PAGE 03 STATE 102444

OTHER MEMBERS OF THE SUBCOMMITTEE MAY HAVE. END TEXT. KISSINGER

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Message Attributes

Automatic Decaptioning: X
Capture Date: 01 JAN 1994
Channel Indicators: n/a
Current Classification: UNCLASSIFIED
Concepts: ECONOMIC CONDITIONS, US CONGRESSIONAL PRESENTATIONS, POLITICAL SITUATION
Control Number: n/a
Copy: SINGLE
Draft Date: 01 MAY 1975
Decaption Date: 01 JAN 1960
Decaption Note:
Disposition Action: n/a
Disposition Approved on Date:
Disposition Authority: n/a
Disposition Case Number: n/a
Disposition Comment:
Disposition Date: 01 JAN 1960
Disposition Event:
Disposition History: n/a
Disposition Reason:
Disposition Remarks:
Document Number: 1975STATE102444
Document Source: CORE
Document Unique ID: 00
Drafter: AWLUKENS:MJK
Enclosure: n/a
Executive Order: N/A
Errors: N/A
Film Number: D750154-0245
From: STATE
Handling Restrictions: n/a
Image Path:
ISecure: 1
Legacy Key: link1975/newtext/t19750588/aaaadcwb.tel
Line Count: 108
Locator: TEXT ON-LINE, ON MICROFILM
Office: ORIGIN EUR
Original Classification: UNCLASSIFIED
Original Handling Restrictions: n/a
Original Previous Classification: n/a
Original Previous Handling Restrictions: n/a
Page Count: 2
Previous Channel Indicators: n/a
Previous Classification: n/a
Previous Handling Restrictions: n/a
Reference: n/a
Review Action: RELEASED, APPROVED
Review Authority: ShawDG
Review Comment: n/a
Review Content Flags:
Review Date: 11 JUL 2003
Review Event:
Review Exemptions: n/a
Review History: RELEASED <11 JUL 2003 by SilvaL0>; APPROVED <03 MAR 2004 by ShawDG>
Review Markings:

Margaret P. Grafeld
Declassified/Released
US Department of State
EO Systematic Review
05 JUL 2006

Review Media Identifier:
Review Referrals: n/a
Review Release Date: n/a
Review Release Event: n/a
Review Transfer Date:
Review Withdrawn Fields: n/a
Secure: OPEN
Status: NATIVE
Subject: MR. LAINGEN TESTIMONY FOLLOWING IS STATEMENT BY MR. LAINGEN, DEPUTY ASSISTANT
TAGS: PFOR, PGOV, PO, US, (LAINGEN, L BRUCE)
To: LISBON
Type: TE
Markings: Margaret P. Grafeld Declassified/Released US Department of State EO Systematic Review 05 JUL 2006